CHAPTER 1
PRACTICAL CURRICULUM DECISION MAKING

INTRODUCTION

The idea of teachers being "curriculum makers" (Clandinin, 1992), has often been portrayed as central to the professional self concept of teachers, but the curriculum is, in many ways, increasingly externally controlled as an arm of social policy. Ball and Bowe (1992) have shown, that governments, in pursuit of national goals of increased education efficiency, have implemented professional development programs in Australia, the United Kingdom and the USA that have become increasingly tied to central systems of student assessment and staff appraisal and less frequently to curriculum development. Few teachers would disagree with Hargreaves (1992) or Apple (1993) that the nature and demands of the job have changed profoundly in the last twenty years.

For better or worse, teaching is not what it was. Curriculum programs are constantly changing as innovations multiply and the pressures for reform increase. Assessment strategies are more diverse and more time consuming. There is increasing consultation with parents and more communication with colleagues. Teacher's responsibilities are more extensive. Their roles are more diffuse. (Hargreaves, 1992, p. 87)
Whether the outcome is a movement towards professionalism, as Hargreaves is inclined to conclude, or to proletarianization, as Apple suggests, over the last twenty years teachers have sought public recognition that it is necessary for schools to develop curriculum to suit their own needs and their own students. These deliberative processes are seen by many researchers of school improvement, such as Lieberman and Miller (1990), to define the ethos of the school. While teachers have had more autonomy to decide what they will teach, particularly at the junior levels in Victoria, this approach is susceptible to problems of continuity and omission. Whichever way current movements in education in Victoria are interpreted it has become apparent that it is necessary for someone or a group of people in schools to oversee the curriculum; a task which has traditionally fallen to the Principal, particularly in independent schools.

Curriculum Co-ordinators or Directors of Curriculum have been appointed in the last two decades to fulfil this role. The actual role or job description of this person varies from school to school. Some schools appointed a person to the substantive position of Curriculum Co-ordinator over ten years ago, while at other schools the appointment is a relatively recent one. In addition, the position of Curriculum Co-ordinator is, in most instances, not a full-time position but is linked to other duties within the school; for instance, teaching duties, timetabling, professional development duties, other administrative duties.
Little has been written about middle management in general and, in particular, curriculum co-ordination in schools and the role of the person so appointed. Schwab (1983) attempted to characterise the role in theoretical and practical terms. The research undertaken in this thesis employs Schwab's schema to analyse the role of curriculum co-ordinators in girls' schools and to probe its general value. This research is an investigation of curriculum decision making and provides a descriptive and interpretative account of this aspect of the social organisation and educational leadership in three selected girls' schools. Stakeshaft (1994) concluded that women tend to have a style that is people centred, teaching and learning and community oriented and reported that women were more likely to be found co-ordinating institutional programmes in schools. While this thesis makes no comparisons between male and female managers and is not concerned with the gender debate, it does draw critical attention to the quality of curriculum deliberation. This might be called a middle management problem, but is perhaps better seen, as Berlak and Berlak (1983) and Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) portray it, as a problem inherent in the traditional hierarchical approach to school inquiry and leadership.

The study was not intended to be a comprehensive study of all Curriculum Co-ordinators in independent girls' schools or even representative Curriculum Co-ordinators in independent girls' schools but aimed to provide case studies which were illustrative instances in the manner described by
Stenhouse (1978). The subjects of the study and the author of the research were practising Curriculum Co-ordinators in independent girls’ schools at the time of the research.

Louis Smith (1990), a pioneer of qualitative field research, suggests that it is appropriate at the outset to explain my ethical orientation. Each individual, he observed, must start with “one’s personal background and expectations”. I entered this work with a professional role and an ethical perspective that I felt to be very close to that of the subjects of the study. My ethical stance, as personified by my personal and professional life, was my best guide to the expectations of the Curriculum Co-ordinators, who formed the subjects of this study.

In order to protect the privacy of the individuals and schools involved in the study, the Curriculum Co-ordinators and the schools were not mentioned by their correct names and the research was conducted according to the principle of informed consent, whereby I discussed the project with the Curriculum Co-ordinators as clearly and honestly as possible. This involved engaging the Curriculum Co-ordinators in dialogue from the beginning to the end of the study. During these consultations, the author and the Curriculum Co-ordinators decided that an impersonal mode of address would be used to identify and to distinguish Curriculum Co-ordinators and schools. This mode of address was adopted in order to reflect the formal
nature of schools as institutions and to emphasise the focus on the issues, processes and functions of curriculum co-ordination as opposed to a focus on the personnel involved. The author realised that this may appear artificial and contrived as the Curriculum Co-ordinators involved in the study operate on a personal level at their schools.

It was recognised that each of the Curriculum Co-ordinators would construct their own perception of the task thereby reflecting institutional conventions and expectations. The elucidation of these perceptions and conventions was conducted in keeping with the emerging definitions of qualitative research as participative, co-operative and experiential. Smith (1990) observed that ethical stances are dictated by broad social principles. My view of curriculum leadership was guided by conceptions of curriculum coherence, intellectual rigour and humanistic values rather than any principle of administrative or instrumental necessity. Finally, this study was dominated by the ethical principle that this research was well worth doing. I expected the research to enrich and to enhance my role, as a curriculum leader, and those of the other Curriculum Co-ordinators who participated in the study.
SCHWAB’S MODEL OF PRACTICAL CURRICULUM

DECISION MAKING

Schwab’s (1983) model of curriculum leadership in schools was his fourth and final attempt to characterise curriculum studies as an intellectual discipline. In this paper he defined the curriculum as that which is successfully conveyed to differing degrees to different students, by committed teachers using appropriate materials and actions, of legitimated bodies of knowledge, skill, taste, and propensity to act and react, which are chosen for instruction after serious reflection and communal decision by representatives of those involved in the teaching of a specified group of students who are known to the decision makers. (p. 240)

His concern was that curriculum decisions are often premeditated on limited and partial theoretical foundations. This view has been supported by many writers such as Hargreaves (1984), who examined teachers’ theorising in different settings, and Cuban (1992), whose historical insight pointed to the difficulty of maintaining intellectual communities of teachers and academics for curriculum discussions. Schwab (1978) argued that curriculum decision making is essentially a practical art, which is eclectic in its use of theory, and that a defensible curriculum or plan of curriculum must be one which somehow takes into account all of the available theoretical insights. He suggested a conceptual “tool”, comprising a set of factors called “commonplaces”, whereby this may be accomplished. Schwab proposed that there are four commonplaces of education, namely the teacher, the
student, what is taught and the milieu of teaching/learning and that all of these four commonplaces need to be considered in any curriculum decision. However he recognised that all four commonplaces may not have equal relevance for all curriculum decisions and that

it is only by consideration of the present state of the curriculum, the present condition of students and surrounding circumstances, all in the light of all the commonplaces equally, that a decision to favour one or the other is justified. (p. 241)

The assumptions underlying Schwab’s (1983) concept of curriculum and the nature of practical curriculum decision making were reflected in his suggestion that “not one person, but a group” (p. 244) is required to oversee the curriculum and curriculum change. A group was suggested for the process of curriculum decision making as the task had become so complex that it is unlikely that one person was able to consider all the ramifications of the commonplaces. He argued that curriculum decision making requires

deliberative exchange and consideration among several persons or differing selves about concrete alternatives in relation to particular times and places. (p. 239)

Schwab’s paper was concerned with three practical issues, the composition of the curriculum committee, the chair of the curriculum committee, the role of the curriculum leader and how this person could be trained for the position. Responding to Schwab’s propositions, Garver (1984) argued that “practical reasoning is essentially a linguistic activity, and deliberation and practical
action make sense only in a community.” (p. 171) Shulman (1984), in another perspective, emphasised the importance of the individual teacher and their personal practical reasoning. He asserted that it is possible for an individual to become an eclectic and therefore able to replace the group for the purpose of deliberation. Shulman suggested that the reasons why a group is desirable has more to do with the nature and functions of a school and the need to communicate and to implement change than it does to the likelihood that one person is unable to consider all the commonplaces.

Schwab did not disagree with this. However Schwab asserted that

though inner deliberation on an extensive matter is possible, it is extremely difficult, especially because it requires a state of nonbias with respect to emphasis on one commonplace or another. (p. 244)

Whatever the rationale, the conclusion is the same; an informed group is important for the curriculum decision making process.

The Composition of Schwab’s Curriculum Committee:

Having established that a group is desirable for curriculum decision making and, further, that this group will be required to deliberate on and to represent the commonplaces, the importance of criteria for the selection of members of the committee becomes apparent.

The composition of the group, outlined by Schwab, included teachers of varying pedagogical commitments and special competencies (depending on
the task before the committee), a student representative, the Principal, and a member of the School Board or a community member with educational interests. Other members (subject matter specialists and/or social scientists) would also be present representing the commonplaces.

A diverse group was necessary, according to Shulman (1984), "to provide the broad range of perspectives required for an adequate understanding of the problem and its potential solutions." (p. 185) The committee's activities will emphasise "individual reflection and group deliberation in the interests of short term decisions and actions and long term teacher development." (Shulman, 1984, p. 190)

Teachers form the backbone of Schwab's committee for reasons that include their knowledge of the students' behaviour, aspirations, background and what they are inclined to learn, the fact that teachers will not be told what to do and that it is not possible to formulate plans to control the teachers' judgement or behaviour. Schwab asserted that "teachers must be involved in debate, deliberation and decisions about what and how to teach." (p. 245) Consequently he included teachers who are involved in the proposed change, teachers who are remote from the change and "ingenious" teachers or those who are able to solve problems. Further, other teachers could be invited onto the committee when appropriate. This mix of teachers was intended to allow for a diversity of opinions, ideas, suggestions and views and to ensure that
the deliberations would not be biased in one direction. Such a composition also enables all voices to be heard.

This latter aspect was of concern to teachers themselves, as Schwartz (1984) discovered, in a three year study on dysfunctional stress among teachers. This study showed that one of the major factors relating to teacher stress concerned the teachers' need to feel that they have some control over the curriculum and to feel that they are valued. In high stress schools, the teachers “no longer believed anything they did would make a difference in students' learning.” (Schwartz, 1984, p. 444) These feelings of a lack of status were equated with not being consulted over curriculum decisions, feeling “put down” by the Principal and feelings of not being treated as a worthwhile professional. Other factors relating to high stress situations included feelings of job and physical security (or rather a lack of these securities), and feeling that there was insufficient time and opportunities to interact with other adults to discuss personal and professional issues in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Schwartz suggested that Schwab's curriculum committee would address the problems just mentioned. Schwab's curriculum committee allowed for teachers to be involved in curriculum decisions and recognised their expertise and experience as valuable commodities that should not be overlooked.
As mentioned before, the Principal has a role and schedule which may often preclude their attendance at all the meetings relating to a particular curriculum decision. However Schwab felt that it is important for the Principal to be a member of the committee, as distinct from being the convener of the committee, as this would allow the Principal to participate in curriculum decisions within her/his own time constraints and, most importantly, the Principal would “have the fullest knowledge of the smallest but most potent social milieu which affects teaching and learning, that is, the milieu of the school itself.” (p. 247)

In corroboration of Schwab’s ideas, Tyler (1984) anticipated difficulties in implementation of Schwab’s model where the Principal had not taken part in any of the deliberations. This does not mean that it is necessary for the Principal to attend all meetings, but that the Principal is cognisant of the nature of the deliberations being undertaken by the committee.

Schwab did suggest that a member of the School Board or Council should be on the committee. Ideally this person should have expert knowledge of what other schools are doing. However he acknowledged that these people often do not have a sound knowledge of what schools do and why they do it. Therefore they may have no idea of the consequences of their policies and, in fact, may not be aware of how the policies translate in terms of curriculum. Schwab supposed that the member of the School Council who attends the
meetings would be able to convey to the other members of the Council the knowledge that he/she has acquired.

The Role of Schwab's Curriculum Leader:

The major portion of Schwab's paper was concerned with the role of the individual who will be the chair of the curriculum group. Schwab was concerned to define the curriculum leader's role and to recognise that the role was an important one that should be differentiated from the Principal's role and other administrative roles. He suggested that the curriculum leader must "be seen by teachers as one of theirs." (p. 247) This was another reason for the inclusion of the Principal on the curriculum committee.

Schwab intimated that the curriculum leader required extended theoretical and practical preparation and could be someone from outside of the school, like a consultant, but the latter is not a critical feature of his model. The practice, in most non-government schools, is for the Principal to create a permanent position for someone from within the school or to appoint a new staff member who becomes part of the school and hence ceases to be an outsider. The advantage of an inside appointment rather than the employment of a consultant is that the school-based curriculum leader would have a greater understanding of the commonplaces relating to the school than the consultant. On the other hand, the external consultant will have no
preconceived opinions of the school and may be seen as a neutral chairperson.

The characteristics seen by Schwab as desirable for the leader of the curriculum committee included

tact, and command of small group rhetoric; a reasonable familiarity with the outcomes of current and recent research in the education-directed aspects of the behavioural sciences, and a good grounding in philosophical summaries of scientific investigation, of the truth-status of its outcomes, and of the characteristics of common experience. (p. 254)

These role characteristics were defined, by Schwab, in terms of the following processes:

• putting the special knowledge and modes of knowing of teachers into greater service in curriculum development;

• enhancing the possibilities of attracting a greater number of daring, experienced, and intellectually active people on staff and from outside into curriculum discussions;

• establishing challenging decision-making and collaborative planning as part of the function of teachers;

• providing a basis for teachers to recognise themselves as possessed of special knowledge and competence by providing them with a sense of intellectual resources;

• critically reviewing changes in knowledge and attitudes inherent in proposed and actual changes in the curriculum;
• writing short issue-based papers and formal papers which demonstrate both understanding, comprehension, and a well-developed capacity to report.

Schwab’s model for the role of the curriculum leader may be compared with Kath Murdoch’s (1992) suggestions for the role of an agent of change. Murdoch saw this role encompassing the following processes:

• Input which can involve providing resources, modelling strategies, providing teaching demonstration and assistance, and making planning explicit.

• Facilitation which can involve setting and maintaining predictable systems, helping teachers make connections, and moderating.

• Response which can involve listening, providing feedback and positive reinforcement, and interacting on a social level.

• Challenge which can involve presenting alternatives, and providing opportunities for critical reflection.

Murdoch argued that these processes are interdependent, depending on the others for full effect and overlapping in varying degrees. Hence they may be considered as parts of a fan (see Appendix A) that hinge on an interpretive stance, ie: knowing the teachers, the school and the curriculum. Her account was based on her experience as an external consultant but were applied to the
role of change agents in general. According to Aubrey (1991), consultation goals include offering an objective point of view, helping to increase problem-solving skills, and, increasing an awareness of the resources available to deal with persistent problems.

Many of Murdoch’s processes are compatible with Schwab’s framework for the role. However there appears to be a difference in the knowledge required for these two roles. Schwab asserted that the curriculum leader should have a working knowledge of the current educational research relating to curriculum as well as to the political climate and any other factors that may influence curriculum presentation and changes. This is more substantial than just “knowing the curriculum” from the teachers’ perspective. Murdoch was centrally concerned with the social processes of institutional and professional change while Schwab emphasised pedagogical knowledge. This difference in emphasis probably originated in Murdoch’s experience in primary education and Schwab’s attention to secondary education but, more importantly, to the difference between management models of teaching which mirror staff development processes in each system.

Schwab’s Curriculum Deliberation:

The focus of Schwab’s model was that the chairperson would “need to evoke and maintain an appropriately deliberative mode of discussion.” (Schwab,
1983, p. 254) A deliberative mode of discussion, in Schwab’s view, would ensure that the discussion recognised the relative importance of each commonplace and maintained this focus throughout deliberations. Hopefully this would enable the discussions to proceed unemotionally and without conflict. In this atmosphere the people concerned should be able to expound their point of view without recriminations and ridicule. All points could be considered in relation to the established framework. Personalities should be distanced and the issues highlighted. However the maintenance of such a mode of discussion is a formidable task for the curriculum leader.

Deliberation is complex and arduous. It treats both ends and means and must treat them as mutually determining one another. It must try to identify, with respect to both, what facts may be relevant. It must try to ascertain the relevant facts in the concrete case. It must try to identify the desiderata in the case. It must generate alternative solutions. It must make every effort to trace the branching pathways of consequences which flow from each alternative and affect desiderata. It must then weigh alternatives and their costs and consequences against one another, and choose, not the right alternative, for there is no such thing, but the best one. (Schwab, 1978, p. 318)

Tyler (1984), reflecting on his considerable experience as an educational evaluator concluded that he would have greatly benefited from Schwab’s role function to “remove barriers to communication, to evoke and maintain an appropriately deliberative mode of discussion that considers all commonplaces and all alternatives.” (p. 99) He noted that amongst the deliberative skills required, the chair would be expected to devise ways of combating and dealing with the non-deliberative interruptions to discussions.
In addition to tact, Schwab proposed that the Chairperson needed to be sensitive to the attitudes of each member of the group, be able to reassure each member of the group that their needs would be met and that they would be able to have their say within the boundaries of the discussion. All of this could only be accomplished if the Chairperson maintained an unbiased and fair attitude whilst ensuring that the group stayed focussed on the task at hand - there is often someone who distracts the group's attention away from the discussion, either consciously or unconsciously.

As mentioned earlier, Schwab's curriculum leader could well be a consultant. The desired personal qualities of the curriculum leader may be equated with those outlined for consultants by Kubr (1983), who suggested that the ability to understand people and to work with them was one of the key attributes for would-be consultants. This included respecting and tolerating other people and their views and opinions, being able to anticipate and to evaluate human action, gaining the trust and respect of others, being able to make easy human contact, and possessing courtesy and good manners. The long term commitment to particular dilemmas and to working with a group of teachers and to establish the trust of a Principal were however important requirements in many schools.
The other personal and intellectual qualities, suggested by Kubr, include intellectual ability (ability to learn quickly and easily, ability to observe, gather, select and evaluate facts, ability to synthesise and to generalise, creative and imaginative); ability to communicate, persuade and motivate; intellectual and emotional maturity (stability of behaviour, independence, self-control, flexibility); personal drive and initiative; ethics and integrity (genuine desire to help others, honest, ability to recognise one's limitations and the ability to admit to mistakes and to learn from them); and, finally, physical and mental health. As Aubrey (1991) asserted, the human and technical roles of the consultant cannot be separated and the "skills of effective communication are crucial". (p. 4)

Deliberation is the key quality sought in discussions on Schwab’s curriculum committee. According to Walker’s (1975) naturalistic model for curriculum development, deliberation comes between platform and action or design. Platform refers to a set of beliefs and values about teaching and learning and includes conceptions, aims, procedures, theories and images. Deliberation refers to applying the platform and relevant collected data to practical situations to generate alternative solutions and to then choose the most appropriate solution. The subsequent design and action is therefore based on a set of deliberations.
Eisner (1984) suggested, in response to Schwab’s model, that very few policy makers possess the necessary skills in deliberation and in the arts of the eclectic. Eclecticism, is central to Schwab’s conception of successful deliberation. According to Schwab (1978), the eclectic curriculum coordinator recognises the usefulness of theory and employs it appropriately in curriculum decision making.

Schwab identified the problem of maintaining a deliberative mode of discussion as one of ensuring an appropriate emphasis among the commonplaces. He suggested that this may be accomplished by continual vigilance on the part of the curriculum leader to refocus the discussion when it strays, to re-emphasise the relevant commonplaces, to remind the committee of the agenda relating to the commonplaces, and to record the minutes of the meeting in such a way as to reflect the time spent on each point raised for discussion. Schwab, when replying to Wegener (1986), emphasised that the role of the curriculum chairperson is not to instruct the members of the committee or to use the authority of his/her status to make proposals to the committee regarding the aims of education. The role of the curriculum leader, in deliberation, is to set an example for others to follow and to provide an atmosphere for deliberation.

Tyler (1984) questioned whether ordinary teachers would be able to acquire the necessary deliberative skills required by Schwab. Shulman (1984)
wondered whether the curriculum chair should be the only person to possess the desired characteristics. He suggested that the other members of the committee would be able to participate more fully and effectively if they identified the dilemmas facing the chair. Schwab's idea was that eventually all members of the committee would discern the advantages of deliberation and then discussions would proceed with less disruptions and with less intervention by the leader to maintain the appropriate mode of discussion. Wegener (1986) felt that

the teachers who enter into the deliberations of a Schwabian curriculum group will be learning new skills - skills of deliberation - and as a consequence they will in time become different educators with new concerns and new interests. (p. 223)

There is no doubt that deliberation is a more effective mode of discussion than debate or confrontation. Deliberation aims to allow all opinions to be voiced and to be considered. In many situations, it is the person(s) with the loudest voice or the person(s) with the more forceful personality who is heard and who often dominates curriculum discussion. Such a situation does not allow all possibilities to be considered. However, the problem remains of how to acquire the deliberative mode of discussion and how to maintain it. Schwab's solution was a prolonged internship with an experienced curriculum co-ordinator in a graduate training programme.
Training of the Curriculum Leader:

Schwab acknowledged that the intellectual and personal qualities of the individual who is the curriculum leader would be of paramount importance to the fulfilment of this role. As has been mentioned, maintaining a deliberative mode of discussion is not an easy task. Garver (1984) suggested that “teaching deliberation is difficult partly because deliberation itself is difficult and takes practice” and that “one can become accustomed to the difficulties in deliberation only by deliberating, not by listening to a teacher.” (p. 170) In addition, a knowledge of the eclectic arts is not universal. Hence the individuals choosing to be curriculum leaders would benefit from a training programme.

The diversity of skills required by the curriculum leader indicates that this training would need to be over an extended period of time. At the present time, most curriculum leaders are appointed from within the school and usually have no formal training in curriculum. Indeed most Principals making the appointment will bring their own idea of what the curriculum encompasses, and what they see as the role or position of a curriculum leader or co-ordinator.

Schwab recognised that “most traditional graduate programmes do not prepare graduate students in the skill areas he has specified” (Schwartz,
1984, p. 458), and suggested that there is a place for the establishment of university courses for the specific training of "curriculum professors". In theory this is the logical conclusion of his paper. However the practice is another matter. Eisner (1984) questioned whether it was possible to prepare people to have the necessary breadth and vision required. Many aspects of the role are subjective and open to interpretation. Moreover present curriculum professors have not been trained in this mode.

Overview:

There is little doubt that curriculum leadership is important in schools acting in a social and economic climate of increasing uncertainty and complexity and that curriculum leaders would benefit from a clarification of their role, thus enabling them to serve the needs of their schools more effectively.

Schwab has provided a framework for consideration of the role of the curriculum leader and for the composition of a curriculum committee within the school. Henrietta Schwartz (1984) suggested that Schwab's model does (and has) worked.

When attention is given to the four commonplaces, when teachers are intensively and meaningfully involved in the curriculum reform effort from its inception, when the Principal is included as an active participant and when the Curriculum Chairman is a skilled knowledgeable practitioner/scholar, curriculum change can be effective. (p. 461)
There is no doubt that deliberations among teachers and others involved in curriculum decisions can address the tensions relating to the conflicting values at the school. However Schwartz observed there are other issues that impinge on curriculum decision making. Often these issues relate to the top-down nature of mandated curriculum, whereby the Curriculum Co-ordinator may be co-opted to the “management” rather than remaining one of the “workers”.

Curriculum researchers recognise Schwab's theoretical contribution. Most of their critical concerns centre around the difficulties of educating and training teachers and curriculum leaders in deliberation and the arts of the eclectic. Nevertheless Schwab offers a theoretical schema by which it is possible to critically appraise the role of curriculum co-ordination and educational leadership in schools.
CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to investigate the ways in which Curriculum Co-ordinators experience their role, thus providing some insight into the following questions.

- How have Curriculum Co-ordinators in the selected Girls’ Schools been trained for their position?

- What is the role of the Curriculum Co-ordinator in the selected Girls’ Schools?

- To what extent do Curriculum Co-ordinators in the selected Girls’ Schools perceive and fulfil their leadership role according to Schwab’s theoretical scheme?

- What is the role of the Principal in the selected Girls’ Schools in curriculum decision making?

- Can the deliberative processes of curriculum decision making in the selected Girls’ Schools be characterised?

Experienced teachers, as the three volunteer curriculum co-ordinators in this thesis are, needed, by their own declaration, opportunities to raise issues, to
study and to interpret their own experiences and insights if they were to improve their practices and to sustain a lively commitment to their profession. My own experience, both as a curriculum co-ordinator and as a teacher, tells me that teachers know a great deal more than they consciously recognise or articulate. The articulation of this insight into their professional life was intended to help me and the curriculum co-ordinators to appraise and elaborate Schwab’s schema in the context of the girls’ schools in which we work.

RESEARCH DESIGN:

The interview programme was adapted from Wood (1992), who used narratives in the professional development of senior staff. Wood’s programme, as she described it, involved eight phases:

1. an initial interview between the teacher and his or her immediate supervisor, during which the teacher recounts a critical incident or particular memory of his or her teaching or learning experience;

2. a collaborative interpretation of that narrative account to discover a continuing challenge or theme in that teacher’s professional life;

3. reflection by the teacher on this story and its theme, and the eventual selection of professional goals based on insights that have arisen from that reflection;
4. a second interview during which the supervisor and teacher explore the teacher’s professional goals and ways to monitor progress towards these goals, including journal keeping;
5. at least one classroom observation;
6. feedback to the teacher presented in narrative style and framed within the teacher’s stated goals;
7. a written self evaluation by the teacher some time before the end of the school year;
8. a written evaluation by the supervisor that responds to the teacher’s self evaluation.

While some elements, including direct observation of the Curriculum Co-ordinators’ work in their school, were not feasible, many aspects of Wood’s approach were attractive to the three volunteer subjects of this study and were incorporated into the current study.

The process used to investigate curriculum co-ordination in the three girls’ schools involved eight phases:
1. contact made to secure assistance from the Curriculum Co-ordinators, usually by telephone, to discuss the research approach; this was necessary to ensure that the Curriculum Co-ordinators knew what was
being asked of them and the personal time commitment involved in keeping a diary and the interview schedule.

2. preparatory to the first interview a copy of the outline of the research, some suggestions for keeping the diary and a list of the questions to be asked in the interview were sent to each Curriculum Co-ordinator; this allowed time for the Curriculum Co-ordinators to reflect upon their practice and to prepare their responses.

3. the Curriculum Co-ordinators kept a diary of their school related activities for a week.

4. the diaries were sent to me; this enabled me to read the diaries before the interviews so that I was able to ask questions about the entries that I did not understand, to check preliminary impressions and to note the entries relating to the Curriculum Co-ordinator’s selected curriculum issue of the week which would be discussed more fully in the interview.

5. interviews were arranged with each Curriculum Co-ordinator to discuss an issue of interest or concern that they had identified, as recorded in their diary. In addition, the Curriculum Co-ordinators were asked questions relating to the composition of their curriculum committee, the agendas of the last two meetings, the nature of decision making at the meetings, and finally questions related to their role in terms of Schwab’s characteristics.
6. a draft narrative of the issue was sent to the three Curriculum Co-ordinators for reflection and correction.

7. a second interview to discuss the draft narrative was arranged; this was usually conducted over the telephone.

8. the final draft of the narrative was sent to each Curriculum Co-ordinator for their comment.

**DISCUSSION OF METHODOLOGY**

This research involved a judgment about the practical value of Schwab’s theoretical schema in the area in which I attempted to work, that led to the formulation of a research design that enabled the imagined (and unimagined) outcomes to be realised. The desired outcomes related to describing existing decision making processes, identifying the settings and situation of curriculum decision making, and to elaborate Schwab’s schema. The information was collected during the course of a number of meetings. Other sources of data, namely diaries and agendas of the meetings, were used to permit checking of observations and interpretations.

Data collection necessarily involved attention to certain biographical details, of the three subjects, which bound the personal and professional lives of the women studied. Susan Acker (1992) suggested that “careers are provisional,
kaleidoscopic constructions, made up of everyday events and interchanges”.
(p. 161) She made a distinction between careers shaped by individual decisions and those shaped by the structural constraints that limit careers while recognising that both these factors normally operate. Women, Acker found, tend to have neither career ladders nor career paths but, must negotiate their own opportunities and often have “horizontal” rather than “vertical” careers. The Curriculum Co-ordinators involved in this study certainly have an extended reach of responsibilities. This thesis, however, did not aim to provide cases studies of women’s careers; their careers were mentioned for the purpose of establishing the training they had received prior to the appointment to their current position as Curriculum Co-ordinator.

The type of research undertaken, according to McMillan and Schumacher (1984), Peshkin (1993) can be described as descriptive and interpretive. The accounts offered by the subjects of the study were reported as case studies or instances of curriculum co-ordination from confidential files constructed from interviews, diaries, meeting agendas and other public documentation of their role. Each was interpreted using the theoretical framework offered by Schwab (1983).
Generalisability and Case Studies:

Stenhouse (1978, 1980) spoke of case studies as providing "naturalistic generalisations" that develop with the person as a product of their "lived-in" experience. He said that generalisations from case studies derive from the tacit knowledge of how things are, why they are, how people feel about them, and how these things are likely to be later or in other places with which this person is familiar.

Generalisations seldom take the form of predictions but lead regularly to expectations. They guide action, in fact they are inseparable from action. These generalisations may become verbalised, passing from tacit knowledge to propositional; but they have not yet passed the empirical and logical tests that characterise formal generalisations. (1978, p.6)

Stenhouse, however, did not develop a theoretical language of an alternative to traditional generalizability.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) shifted terminology and spoke of transferability. "The degree of transferability is a direct function of the similarity between the two contexts, what we shall call "fittingness". Fittingness is defined as the degree of congruence between sending and receiving contexts". (p. 124) Later, they added a caution: "The investigator can make no statements about transferability for his or her findings are based solely on data from the studied context alone". Thus Lincoln and Guba provide a less ethereal and more easily understood view of generalizability. However this cautionary
note can be queried in the case of this research where the author can reasonably claim to be speaking for the generalizability of case studies at least within her own context.

Donmoyer (1990) attempted to argue a stronger case for the generalisability of case studies. He proposed that they provide a schema through which it is possible to communicate experiential knowledge and test theoretical models by creating a virtual reality or "lived-in" experience. He suggested that there are three ways in which the good case study does things that direct experience cannot, namely in the areas of accessibility, seeing through the researcher's eyes and decreased defensiveness. Each of these seemed appropriate.

In terms of accessibility, Donmoyer suggested that case studies can take us to places where we would not have the opportunity to go. In this research, the case studies were not expected to provide right answers or paradigms but to extend the range of interpretations available to the researcher in the area of curriculum leadership as perceived by the Curriculum Co-ordinators and their Principals.

Secondly, according to Donmoyer, case studies allow us to look at the world through the researcher's eyes. In this situation the researcher's eyes were
influenced by Schwab’s perspective of curriculum theory. If the case studies are well done they will be useful not only to the uninitiated in curriculum theory but will add depth and dimension to Schwab’s theory in the manner of Schwartz (1984) and Atkins (1993). The bottom line for a good case study remains the richness of the data which will allow the reader to fashion different explanations but which also treat each instance in terms of its uniqueness from any others of the reader’s experience.

Thirdly, Donmoyer (1990) proposed that case studies decrease defensiveness and resistance to learning. Direct experience, particularly in professional contexts fraught with value conflict, can often be threatening and can be screened out. People, he suggested, are more likely to be open to vicarious experience in case studies where the threat is merely psychological.

The project’s main purpose was to develop a general framework that explained and described the role of the curriculum co-ordinator. Schwab’s presentation of the role of the curriculum provided a model with two components; a process component and a component relating to the knowledge base of curriculum leadership. This model enabled me to appraise my own work, to categorise and to analyse aspects of my role that I felt I had not adequately explored or developed. Schwab’s framework for curriculum deliberation and the skills associated with its practice in
committees and elsewhere was bound intuitively with what I knew about curriculum leadership. I sought then to use Schwab's framework to test and to elaborate my ideas about the role.

**Data Collection Strategies:**

The study was limited in scope to three girls' schools. The data collection strategies included the diaries, agendas and minutes of Curriculum Committee meetings, in addition to structured interviews to discuss biographical details, the diaries and Curriculum Committee meetings.

**Part A: Diaries**

In this study, the selected Curriculum Co-ordinators were asked to keep a diary of their activities for seven consecutive days. The letter, including the advice sent on diary keeping requirements, is presented in Appendix B.

**Part B: Interviews:**

The next step in the process involved arranging interviews with each Curriculum Co-ordinator. These initial interviews were recorded and conducted over a two hour period at a venue of convenience to the
Curriculum Co-ordinator. The following questions were asked of each person:

Questions relating to the position of Curriculum Co-ordinator:

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. How long have you been at this school?
3. How many years have you been Curriculum Co-ordinator?
4. How many years have you been Curriculum Co-ordinator at this school?
5. How long has your school had a Curriculum Co-ordinator?
6. Did you have any formal training for the position of Curriculum Co-ordinator?
7. Do you have or have you ever had a mentor for the position of Curriculum Co-ordinator?
8. Do you have a role statement? Please may I have a copy?
9. What is your teaching load?

Questions related to the diary:

1. Which issue was of most concern to you and has taken most of your time during this week? Or pick an issue that you’d like to talk about?
2. Why have you chosen this issue? Why is this issue of interest to you?
3. What process will be used to resolve the issue?
4. To what extent will the Principal be involved in the resolution of the issue?

Questions related to curriculum decision making:

1. Do you have a Curriculum Committee? If yes, who is on the committee? - Principal? students? staff? other?
2. How often does the committee meet?
3. Do you chair the Curriculum Committee?
4. Do you circulate the agenda before the meeting? How do items/ issues get onto the agenda? Who initiated each of the items on the agenda?
5. Do you write minutes of the meetings? If so, who receives the minutes?
6. What issues have been raised at the last two meetings? Please may I have a copy of the agendas? (and minutes?)
7. What was your role in relation to each of the issues?
8. Which items are exclusively reporting?
9. What is the role of the committee members in relation to the other items?
10. What proportion of the time is spent on deliberation of alternatives or setting up processes?
11. How has your role changed in the time that you have been Curriculum Co-ordinator?
Questions relating to the role, as defined by Schwab, in the week surveyed:

1. How do you encourage staff to participate in curriculum decision making?

2. How do you encourage staff to use their special knowledge in curriculum decision making?

3. How do you empower staff to recognise that they are possessed of special knowledge and competence?

4. How do you encourage staff to see decision-making and collaborative planning as part of their function?

5. How do you critically review changes in knowledge associated with curriculum change?

6. Do you write issue based papers that enable you to demonstrate your understanding of a particular issue? Can you give me some examples of issues for which you would have written issue based papers? Who was the intended audience for these papers?

Validity and Confidentiality:

This research was concerned with accounts from three curriculum coordinators relating to their situations, activities, and programmes, hence validity referred primarily to their accounts. Validity, in this sense, was
related to the account offered by each subject and the constructs outside of
the account; the documentation of the role, the diaries, the agendas and
minutes of the curriculum committee meetings. In this research, it was the
Curriculum Co-ordinators’ view of their role, as curriculum co-ordinator,
and their interpretation of Schwab’s schema that were validated with the
documentary evidence.

In the investigation, the validity of the descriptive data collected was always
in question as the data relied on personal accounts. Each person, in
responding to the questions, was asked to present their own perceptions and
perspectives to their account. Different, equally valid accounts of the role of
curriculum co-ordination were possible from different perspectives. As
Maxwell (1992) has suggested “validity is relative because understanding is
relative; it is not possible for an account to be independent of any particular
perspective.” Nevertheless the participants and the researcher resolved early
in the study that it was possible to speak meaningfully and with a reasonable
prospect of substantive agreement about the role of the curriculum co-
ordinator.

The research undertaken sought descriptive and interpretive validity by
firstly recording and reporting accurately what was said and heard. Methods
used to minimise inaccuracies included taping interviews and recording
precisely what a person said in their own words. Interviews with each Curriculum Co-ordinator were recorded. An account of the relevant material from the interview was written with a view to accurately quoting them. The Curriculum Co-ordinators were asked to validate what I had written to ensure that I did not distort their meaning. This was a time consuming process but hopefully led to less ambiguous accounts.

Interpretive validity is associated with the language used by the people studied and relies on their own words and concepts and hence is difficult to address. In essence, interpretive validity relies on inference of what has been said. The Curriculum Co-ordinators may have been unaware of their own feelings and views or they may have distorted or concealed their views or represented them inaccurately. In this sense, Maxwell (1992) observed that the accounts of participants' meanings are never a matter of direct access, but are always constructed by the researcher(s) on the basis of participants' accounts and other evidence. In this study each role description was interpreted against the other descriptions through the experience of the author.

In this study, aspects of descriptive and interpretive validity needed to be addressed. The author had to constantly be aware of the factors relating to
these types of validity and had to refine her methods of data collection so as to minimise sources of invalidity.

Confidentiality was an issue of central importance. Measor and Sikes (1992) recognised that biographical researchers work in a “tone of intimacy” and are bound to “observe and record things potentially damaging to the individuals” (p. 210) and Goodson (1992) acknowledged that collected data and the subsequent generated accounts can easily be misused and abused. He suggested that it is necessary to be “deeply watchful about who ‘owns’ the data and who controls the accounts.” (p. 239) In this thesis, the constructed accounts were sent to the participants in the study for verification and for vetting to ensure confidentiality was maintained.

Case Study Structure:

In the next chapter, the data is presented in the form of case studies. Each case study has two components which are reported separately under the headings shown below:

a) Curriculum Issue: Each curriculum issue represents an area of concern to the Curriculum Co-ordinator during the week that she was keeping a diary. The curriculum issues will be reported in the following format:
• **The Curriculum Co-ordinator’s Training:** This section will outline the Curriculum Co-ordinator’s background, including the length of time in the position, previous training and qualifications, mentoring, etc., corresponding to the questions asked in the interview relating to the position of the Curriculum Co-ordinator.

• **The Curriculum Issue:** The issue, including the reason for its concern, will be outlined, corresponding to the questions asked relating to the diary.

• **The Process Used for the Resolution of the Issue.**

b) **The Curriculum Committee:** The agendas and minutes of the last two Curriculum Committee meetings will be discussed in addition to the composition and function of the committee.

In Chapter 4, the role of each Curriculum Co-ordinator, in the process used for the resolution of the identified curriculum issue, is compared with the processes outlined in Schwab’s schema. The nature of curriculum deliberation within the Curriculum Committee and the role of the Principal in curriculum deliberation are also investigated.
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